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Jack Thorn's Knife.—Frontispiece.



"I think some one stole it while I was in the pond," said Jack,
in a loud, harsh voice.

p. 18.

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JACK THORN'S KNIFE:

HOW HE LOST IT, AND HOW HE FOUND IT.

IN SHORT WORDS.

PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
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JACK THORN'S KNIFE.

PART I.

JACK THORN'S HOME.

 IN a small town in the State of New York there lived a man whose name was John Thorn. His wife was called Mrs. Thorn, and they had two boys and three girls, whose names we shall learn as we go on.

They lived in a plain white house with green blinds, and in the spring the vines that climbed up its sides, and that had been brown and dry since the fall, turned to a bright green, and the house peeped out from them.

In the front yard there was more than one rose bush; these bloomed in June,

and were as sweet as sweet could be ; and near them grew pinks, sweet-peas, blue-bells, and some plants that I cannot tell the names of. There was one small bed all full of stocks, which had such a strong scent when they were in bloom that you could smell them quite far up the street.

In this yard might be seen a few fine old oak and elm trees, from two of which hung a stout rope swing that was used by girls, and boys too, and made a great deal of sport. When they all came home from school, the first thing they did was to go to this swing and have some fun till their mother called them into the house.

These trees were not all. There were two or three of spruce and pine, whose leaves did not turn brown and fall off when the cold blasts nipped them, but were green all the year round. When the ground was white with snow, their rich, dark hue made the place look gay and bright. So you see it was a home

“not to be sneezed at,” as some queer old folks say.

In front of the hall door was a porch where the Thorns, old and young, used to sit and talk when the work of the day was done; or if a few friends stopped to have a chat with the old folks, and the porch was too small for all of them, the young ones would have a fine game of romps out in the yard. As long as the air was warm and mild they kept up this kind of life, but when it grew sharp and the frost came, they were glad to go into the house, and shut the door, and sit round the blaze of a good warm fire, and watch the flame as it rose and fell, or the sparks that snapped out, and went up in bright points of light. Now and then a few coals would fall, not on the hearth, which was the right place for them, but on the best rug; and then how the girls and boys would jump to pick them up, so that they should not have a chance to burn large holes! In the town

of Stowe, where they lived, wood was cheap and coal was dear, so of course wood was used all through the place.

Back of the house was a large shed, where great piles of round logs lay, not split up, but just as they were hauled in from the woods. It was too hard work for the boys to saw them, so Mr. Thorn did that, and his son Jack, who was twelve years old, split them at odd times when he was not in school. Ned, the next son, who was but eight, was thought too young to do much of this work, but he could cut up the small pine sticks that were used to light the fires, and he did it well, too.


But it is time to speak of the girls, who must not be left out of sight. Grace was not quite ten years old, but was tall and well grown for her age; Ruth was six, and a great pet with her father; but the one that they all loved best was wee, round, fat Dot, who was but three years old. Her name was Jane, but she was

called Dot for fun, and would not have known whom you meant if you had not used this pet name when you spoke to her. She had large blue eyes, a round face, and cheeks as red as a June rose. Her hair looked like threads of gold, and hung on her neck in soft curls. She was too young to go to school, so she stayed at home and plagued her mother a good deal in the course of the day, but she meant no harm by her tricks, and when she had done what gave pain, she would purse up her lips for a kiss, and look so sweet that no one could turn from her.

Now that I have told you the names of these friends of ours, and where they lived, I think I must go on and tell you what took place there one bright May day a few years back.

PART II.

THE PLAY-DAY.

N the same street, and quite near them, lived Jack's friend, Sam Hoyt, a lad of his own age, who spent much of his time at Mr. Thorn's house. On the last day of the week, when the boys were let out of school at noon, and had all the rest of the day to play (if they chose, and had no work to do), Sam came home with Jack, so as to have some sport.

"You must not go to your play till you have done your work, Jack," said Mr. Thorn as he saw the boys pass through the house to the back yard. "You know that is one of my rules—work first, then play. We must have wood that will last for two days to cook

with. It will not take you more than an hour to cut it, if you are smart."

"I'll help you, Jack," said Sam, and threw off his coat as he spoke. "Oh, you have but one axe! Hold on! I will run home and get ours."

While Sam was gone, Jack took out his knife to cut a small piece of stick to make the axe fast to its helve, which was so loose that he feared it might drop out. This knife was the pride of Jack's heart, and had been a gift from his aunt Sue on his last birth-day. He took great care of it, and meant to keep it as long as he lived.

When Sam came back with his axe, the two boys set to work with a good will, and soon had a pile of nice, smooth sticks laid up for the cook-stove. Mrs. Thorn came out to look at them, and said there was all the wood she should want till the first of the next week.

Then the boys were free to play as soon as they could make up their minds

what they wished to do. There was a pond not far off, and the man who owned it kept a small row-boat which he let out to those who liked such sport, but would not give them leave to fish in his pond, as he used it to raise fish for sale. Now, he knew Jack and Sam to be good boys, who would not bring their fish-lines and drop them in when they thought no one could see them, as some boys would, so he let them have his boat when they asked for it. Now they thought the best thing they could do would be to go and take a row.

When they had dined, and the time came for them to start, Ned came out and said he would like to go too. They did not much like to have Ned join them, for he would want to row and do all that they did, and he could not do it well—he was too small—but they did not like to say “No,” for they feared Mr. Thorn might blame them if he knew it, and Ned would be sure to tell him. So they said,

“Come on, then!” and did not say to Ned that they thought it a great bore, though they wished he had not known of their plan.

“Can’t we take a swim while we are down there?” asked Sam. “The air is quite warm to-day.”

“To be sure we can,” said Jack. “Just wait till I go up stairs and get some things. I won’t be gone long.” So he went in, and left Sam and Ned in the wood-shed.

When he came down, the three set out on a fast walk, for there was no time to be lost if they were to get back by tea-time. When they reached the pond, and looked to see if the boat was in use, they were much vexed to see it filled with boys and pushed far out from shore.

“We are too late,” said Jack. “If it had not been for that mean old wood, we should have got here first, and might have had it as well as not.”

“Then the rest could not have got it,”

said Ned. "They would have lost their fun just as we have ours."

"Don't preach," said Jack, who felt cross and did not care to hear good words just then.

"Ned's right, though, for all that," said Sam, who had a kind heart and was glad when the rest of the boys could have a good time. "Our loss is their gain, and it's just as well. Let's have our swim now, and maybe when we come out they will have got through and come back."

So they took off their clothes, laid them by a tree on the bank, and plunged in. It was just the least bit in the world too cool, so they did not stay in long, but had a good brisk rub when they came out, and then a short run to get warm. The boys in the boat were having a good time, and gave no sign that they meant to give up their fun, so our three lads turned once more to the path that would lead them home.

"Where's my knife?" asked Jack, when they had gone on a few steps.

"I don't know," said the two boys in a breath.

"What knife?" asked Sam.

"My new knife with four blades that Aunt Sue gave me last March," said Jack. "I'm sure it was in my clothes when I took them off. I should like to know what has gone with it since then."

"How strange that is!" said Sam. "There was no one near while we were in, and you know I came out first, and the clothes all lay there just as we threw them down. I'm quite sure they could not have been touched."

"I saw you lift up Jack's coat the first thing you laid hold of," said Ned. "Maybe it fell out then."

"So I did lift it up, for the things were all in a heap, and I could not tell which were mine till I looked," said Sam. "Let's go back and hunt it up."

They searched on the ground near the

tree, but in vain, for no knife was to be seen.

“Are you sure you did not leave it at home?” asked Sam. “You may find it there yet.”

“Yes, I am sure,” said Jack. “I felt it when I took off my coat.”

“What *do* you think has gone with it?” asked Ned.

“I think some one stole it while I was in the pond, that’s what I think,” said Jack, in a loud, harsh voice.

Sam felt hurt, as well he might, by Jack’s tone and air, but he had too much good sense to speak to him in the same rude way. Jack strode on in front, and did not once look back at him nor say a word on the way home. Sam talked to Ned, and when they got home they both went into the wood-shed and looked round in the chips, but it was not there.

“No use in that,” said Jack when he saw them at this work. “I took it to the pond with me—there’s no doubt of

that—and now it's plain I've seen the last of it."

"Won't you come and take tea with us, Sam?" called out Mrs. Thorn as she saw him pass the door.

"No, I thank you," said Sam, who had hard work to keep back his tears and wished to get out of Jack's way. "I hope you'll find your knife soon, Jack. Good-night."

"What's this I hear of a knife?" asked Mr. Thorn when Jack came in to tea. "Have you lost it?"

"Yes, sir; Sam Hoyt stole it while I was in the pond to-day," said Jack, who was so put out that he did not care what he said.

"Hush, my son," said Mrs. Thorn. "Do not talk so."

"He did—I know he did," Jack tried to say, but Mr. Thorn broke in, and said:

"If I hear one more word of that kind from you, I shall send you out of the room, and you will go to bed, tea or no

tea. How dare you talk so of that fine boy, who is such a good friend of yours?"

Jack held his tongue for a while, but at length he said, "I don't see who else could have done it, sir."

"For shame!" said Mr. Thorn. "You make me blush for you. Take care that you say to no one else what you have said here this night!"

Jack hung his head and did not speak, but he kept in the same mind, and would not speak to Sam Hoyt from that day, when he could help it. It seems strange that he had no more sense, but he was young and had much to learn.

At first Sam thought that his ill-will would wear off, and tried to be friends with him as he had been all his life; but when he found that Jack went on and sulked just the same, he left off, and did not go near him. So Jack lost a friend, and gained a host of bad thoughts in his stead.


There was a boy whom Jack had not

liked so long as he had been on good terms with Sam Hoyt, but now he took to him, and they were seen locked arm in arm all round the town. This was Ralph Hale, a youth whom most boys feared to be seen with, for he had not a good name, and Mr. Thorn warned his son of this more than once. But Jack was self-willed, and when he thought he should not be found out would go off with Ralph and join him in his play.

“That will bring no good to Jack,” said those who saw them.

PART III.

ON THE HILL.

AY we go to the hill and look for moss to-day?" said Grace, when the next play-day came.

This hill was not quite a mile from Mr. Thorn's house, and had steep sides all full of ferns and moss. On the top was a small hut where they could go in and rest when they had climbed till they were tired.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Thorn, who liked that they should have what they called "a good time." "You may go as soon as we have dined, but you must not stay out late, and you must take great care not to fall and get hurt on that steep bank."

"Oh, mayn't we take our lunch with us

and eat it there?" said Grace. "It would taste so nice!"

"Yes, do let us!" chimed in Ruth. "And we'll be so good when we come back."

"I'll go wis you," piped Dot, who stood with her doll in the right hand and a piece of bread in the left, and munched while she spoke.

"No, you won't, ma'am!" said Grace. "Not if we know it." But Mrs. Thorn laid a soft hand on her head.

"Be kind, my child," said she. "It will not make your day more gay to think that you said a cross word to poor Dot to start with."

"But just think if we *should* take her! She would break down halfway up, and we should have to lift her in our arms. We should not have a bit of fun at that rate."

"All this may be true, my love," said Mrs. Thorn, "and yet a kind word costs no more than a sharp one, and is twice

as sweet to hear. I should not let Dot go if you wished it, so you need have no fear on that score."

"You'll go with us, won't you, Ned?" asked Ruth as Ned came into the room.

"Yes, I think I will," said he. "I used to like to go with Jack and Sam, but I can't get hold of Jack now-a-days. He's off with Ralph Hale all the while."

Mrs. Thorn sighed, and the tears were in her eyes as she put up the lunch.

How nice it was! There were cold ham, a small pie, bread and cheese, some plain cake, and a cup to drink out of. This was not the first time that the kind mother had done such things, and she knew how to make them taste good.

"Now, kiss all round, and then go," she said when all was done. They did so, and Grace hugged Dot close to her, to make up for what she had said at first.

"You must bwing me some nice gween things," said Dot, whose talk was not as plain as it might be.

“Oh yes, we will!” cried both the girls at once, and then they went off with Ned,

“With hearts so light,
With eyes so bright,
With step so quick and gay,
No care nor fear,
No frown, no tear—
Ah! would I were as they!”

They felt proud, as they went through the town, to think that their mother could trust them so far from home. The day was clear and fine, not too warm or too cold, but just right, and all looked as if they were to have a good trip.

By and by they came to the foot of the hill, which was a good way out of town. They toiled up its steep sides as fast as their hands and feet would take them, for they had to use both to climb by, and found a great deal of fresh green moss, which was what they went for. They used it at home to lay in plates or pots and stick flowers in; if wet through and through, it kept them fresh a long

time. When they reached the top of the hill, they sank down on the ground to rest.

"Why don't we keep on to the hut?" asked Ned, who was strong and did not mind the walk.

"Oh, I can't!" said Grace, out of breath. "I could not go one step more if you were to give me a bag full of gold!"

"Nor I," said Ruth, who was sure to think on all points just as Grace did.

When they had had a good long rest, they got up and kept on to the log hut, which had been there so long that some of the boys used to say in joke that it must have been made when the hill was. The roof was full of holes that let in the rain, and the glass had long been gone from the sash, but the thick walls kept out the fierce rays of the sun, and as the hut was free to all, no one could blame it if it was, so to speak, the worse for wear.

When our three young friends drew

near to the door and looked in, a strange sight met their view.

On the thick, round log which served for a bench sat Jack and Ralph Hale, deep in talk. They were so much wrapped up in it that they did not hear the rest till they knocked on the door to rouse them.

"What do you want here?" said Jack when he saw who they were. "Be off with you. Have you come here to play the spy on me?"

"We have as good a right here as you have," said Ned.

"We did not know you were here," said Grace, "but if we had known it, we should have come just the same."

"Come, Ralph," said Jack, "you and I will go somewhere else, and leave the place to them if they are so mean as to turn us out and come when folks don't want them."

"We don't want to turn you out," said Grace, "but we want to eat our lunch

where it is nice and cool. We'll give you some if you'll stay. See what a fine lot there is of it!"

"No," said Jack, "I can get all I want at home. Come, Ralph;" and the two boys went off in a huff.

"I'm sure we had a right to come here," said Grace, when they were out of sight. "All the boys and girls do, just when they have a mind to."

"Of course they do," said Ned. "I shall tell father of Jack, see if I don't. He has told him he did not like him to go with Ralph Hale."

"No, no!" said Grace; "don't do that. We must not tell tales. I don't think father would like it at all if you did. He can take care of Jack as well as we can."

"All right," said Ned, who was sharp-set and did not want to wait. "Out with your lunch."

He filled the tin-cup at a spring nearby, and they ate their good things with great zest.

Then when the sun was not quite so high they went out and had some more play on the hill. Once they came near an old white horse, who had been turned loose to graze. He chanced to whisk his tail, and Grace sprang out of the way.

“Ho! ho!” said Ned. “’Fraid, be ye?”

He had heard an old man who worked on the farm talk in this way, so he said this to make the girls laugh.

“No,” said Grace, “but the horse might kick, and I don’t want him to break my arm, if you please.”

Just then the horse made a quick turn, and Ned jumped as if he had been shot. “Ha, ha, Mr. Ned!” said Grace. “Who be’s ’fraid now?”

“Pooh! pooh!” said Ned in a grand way, and he strolled off as much as to say, “It is not worth my while to stop and talk with you.”

By and by the sun grew low, and then they all knew it was time for them to go

home. They picked up the moss and what was left of their lunch (for there was more than they could eat), and set out, well pleased with their day's tramp.

When they had gone part of the way, they passed a small house where a poor old black man lived. "Why can't we stop here and give Tim Lunt the rest of our food?" asked Ned. "We did not eat much more than half of it."

"So we will," said Grace. "That's a good thought. There's Tim down by the gate now."

They had to turn down a short lane to get to the house, and about halfway there a great dog jumped out through a hole in the fence, and scared them half out of their wits.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" cried the girls. "What *shall* we do? Oh, he'll bite us! he'll bite us!"

But Tim Lunt came out and called, "Down, sir, down!" in so rough a voice that the brute sneaked off with his tail

out of sight, and did not dare to show his head from that time.

“It’s Ralph Hale’s dog,” said Tim. “He must be somewhere near, for Smirk does not go far from him.” So he looked round, and soon saw the bad boy, who lay in the grass where some shrubs screened him from view. Ralph burst out in a loud, coarse laugh when they found him out.

“He set the dog on you, I know he did by his ways!” cried Tim. “For shame, you young scamp, to serve folks so!” and he shook his fist at him. It was all he could do, for he was old and had no strength to whip him, as he would have liked to do.

“We don’t mind him, Tim,” said Grace. “We have brought you some things mother gave us to eat when up on the hill, and there was more than we had need of.”

“Thank you, miss. It was kind in you to think of me. It’s true, I don’t

have much that's nice to eat, and what your ma makes is sure to taste good."

They left the things with him and went home, and did not see Ralph at all on the way. At tea they told of how he set the dog on them, but did not say that they found him and Jack in the hut, for that would have made them tell-tales.

"Well, Dot, how are you to-night?" said her papa as the small chunk of a girl put up her red lips to be kissed.

"I'se well, fank you, sir, and I helped make pies, so I did," said Dot, with a puffed-up air.

"Yes," said Mrs. Thorn, "she stirred in some sand while my back was turned, and I had to throw out the whole panful and make some new sauce. She is a great help to me, is Miss Dot."

"What else did you do, Flips?" said her papa, who called his wee girl by all sorts of pet names.

"I washed my doll's face, and her cheeks came off," said Dot. "Look here!"


and she showed poor Mug with the paint all soaked off her face.

“You’re a great girl!” said Mr. Thorn, as proud as if she had done some fine thing. “I don’t see how we should get on if we had no Mrs. Mouse to keep us all straight.”

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PART IV.

GOOD WORDS.

HE next day was the Lord's day, and all went to church but Mrs. Thorn, who had to stay at home and take care of Dot. Once they took the child with them, but she went to sleep, and snored so loud that all those in the pews near by looked round to see what made such a queer noise, so Mrs. Thorn did not dare to try the same thing again.

When dinner was done, the young folks went to the church school, which was held from three to five o'clock. Ruth had learned a short verse from the Bible to say to Miss Wells, who taught her class, and she said it out loud to Grace to find if it was right :

““ And He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.’ ”

“ Yes,” said Grace, “that’s right. Now hear me say my part of a Psalm :

““ I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

““ I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.

““ And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.’ ”

“ That must be all right,” said Ruth, “or you could not say it so fast. Ned, what did you have to learn?”

“ Just one short verse—it sounds like a hymn,” said Ned :

““ If ways of truth and right you seek,
Five things you’ll mark with care:
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
And *how*, and *when*, and *where*.’ ”

“ Oh, that’s nice,” said Grace. “I mean to learn it, too.”

"So do I," said Ruth, not to be left out.

Jack did not go or come with them, for he thought them too young to be seen with him. But when they came home, as he had walked fast and they had not, they found him in the front porch.

"What did you learn for to-day, Jack?" asked Grace as she came in.

"What's that to you, I should like to know?" said Jack, who had grown quite rude since he went so much with Ralph Hale.

"Well, you need not tell if you don't want to," said Grace, quite set back by his sharp tone. "I'm sure it was no harm to ask."

"Just keep your mouth shut, then, and don't be a goose and try to put on airs," said Jack, who had changed much for the worse in the last few weeks.

"You cross, rude, mean old thing!" said Grace, in no mild tone. "I wish you'd go off to sea or somewhere else, I

don't care where, and not come back till you are grown up and can act like a man ! Now you are more like a cross dog !”

“My dear Grace,” said Mrs. Thorn, who had heard this speech from her room, “what does this mean ? I think my ears must have played me false. Was it *my* child who used such words as those ?”

Grace cast down her eyes, and said in a low tone, “I think when Jack talks so to me I ought to talk back to him. If I did not, he would go on and do it all the more.”

“You know, my love,” said Mrs. Thorn, “we have but one rule for such things : Would Christ have done so ? If he would, then you may feel that it is quite right for you to do the same.”

Grace did not speak, and her mother went on :

“I think you are wrong when you say it would make Jack worse if you were kind to him at these times. I have not found it so in the course of my life.

When those who have done wrong to us see that we do not wish to harm them, but try to be as kind and good as we can, it makes them feel their faults far more than if we scold and fret. Will you not try it and see? I know you will do it to please me, if you have no other ground."

"I will try it," said Grace, who loved her mamma and knew that what she said was true. The next time she met Jack she had a kind word and a smile for him, and he said no more harsh things to her.

"Mother was right," thought Grace. "But that is not strange. It would be more strange if she were *not* right."

When they went to bed that night, Mrs. Thorn knelt down with them, as she did all the nights in the year, and prayed that the good God would keep them safe through those dark hours when there was no one else who could take care of them. Then she asked him to bless them and make them good, and to

have all their dear friends in his charge. But this night she put a new prayer on the list. It was this: "Grant us grace to keep our lips free from all harsh words, and our hearts from hard thoughts. Teach us to be meek and mild like our Lord, and not give way to sin."

And she gave Grace this text, which she soon learned by heart: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Dot, too, small as she was, had her own short prayer; it was in rhyme, and we will write it down here in case there should be some of those who read this book that have not yet learned the lines:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take:
And this I ask for Jesus' sake."

Mrs. Thorn tried to teach Dot what this meant; and I think the child knew as well as some grown folks do when

they say their prayers. But when she had said as the rest did :


“ God bless mother, God bless father, and Jack, and Grace, and Ruth, and all Dot's dear friends ; God bless Dot and make her a good girl,” she would add of her own accord :

“ God bless Mug, and Jess, and Prince, and take good care of them, and give Mug a new dress, 'cause the old one's all worn out.”

The girls laughed at this, for these were the names of her doll, her cat, and the house-dog ; but Mrs. Thorn said they must not laugh, for Dot meant all she said, and that if all the rest of the world put as much heart in their prayers as she did, there would be more true faith than there is now.

PART V.

THE END OF SCHOOL.

 HE warm, long days of June had come, and were wellnigh gone. On the last day of the month the boy who had learned his tasks best through the term was to have a prize.

No one knew what this prize would be, but they knew Mr. St. Clair, who taught them, and were sure that he would give them something they would like to have. Some of them worked for this prize as they would not have done if the hope of it had not been held out to them, but I am glad to say that there were some who did the best they could at all times, and did not need a spur to make them try to learn. Of this last kind was our friend, Sam Hoyt.

He had stood at the head of his class for a long time, and would have stayed there but that his aunt, with whom he lived, had been so sick for some weeks that they feared for her life. This had caused Sam to be late sometimes, and now and then not to come at all, for he felt that he must do all he could for her, as she had been most kind to him since the death of his parents, and if she should die there would be no one left to care for him.

While he was gone, Jack Thorn took his place at the head of the class and kept it, and Sam could not catch up with him. Of course this was not Jack's fault, for it was right for him to stand as high as he could and do his best to keep his place, but it was hard for his friend to bear.

All this time the loss of his knife weighed on Jack's mind. He had made up with Sam so far that he would now speak to him when he met him, but the

old grudge was still strong, and he made Sam feel that he was not now to him what he had been. It is true that not one of the boys in school thought as Jack did, but he kept up his spite with such a firm will that all they could say had not the least effect on him.

At last the great day came—the end of the term.

You may know that not much else was talked of all day, and when night came the great school-room was packed as full as it could hold of friends who came to look on. The desks had all been moved out, and in their place were long seats that reached halfway from side to side of the room, with a pathway to let the guests pass through.

We may be sure that Mr. and Mrs. Thorn were there, as well as Grace and Ned. As Ruth was but six years old, her mamma thought it best for her not to go, so she stayed at home and went to bed with Dot—at least by Dot's side,

for the "wee thing," as an old Scotchman used to call her, had her crib close to the large bedstead where Grace and Ruth lay. Mrs. Thorn would come in some time in the course of the night and look at these three dear ones to see if all was right; and they looked so sweet in their white gowns that she could not help but give them a kiss all round, though they did not know it.

Well, we must go back to our school-room. The friends were all in their seats, and there were Mr. St. Clair and his boys, all in seats on the stage, and first of all the boys were to show off what they had learned that term.

First he gave them hard sums to do, and called one at a time to the black-board, which was placed there in full view. These were new sums, that they had not done till now, and all who looked on were pleased to see how well they did them. Then Mr. St. Clair gave them words to spell, which he took from all

parts of a large book, just as it chanced, for he had not picked them out. Some boys went wrong in this, but it was not strange that they should, for there are few who can spell each word in a book, and make no fault. Then all the books that they had used in school came up in turn, and he asked them some things in each; and for the most part they did well, and showed that all his pains had not been in vain.

After this the boys were formed in rows, the tall ones at the back next the wall, the short ones in front. At one side, but where he could be seen by all, stood Mr. St. Clair.

“I want to ask you, boys,” said he, “which one of you all ought to have this prize, if worth were the test by which I gave it?”

“Sam Hoyt! Sam Hoyt!” they all cried—all but Sam and poor Jack, who longed for it and hoped it might come to him. Sam gave the name of Joe

Bryce, a boy whom he liked, but who was not up to these two in his tasks. He could not say Jack Thorn, for it would not have been true for him to say he thought Jack had the best claim to it.

"You are right," said Mr. St. Clair, when he heard this shout; "that is to say, you think as I do. There is no one to whom I should be so glad to give it as to him. But he has lost some time through his zeal to serve a sick friend; and so it has come to pass that, though he learned all his tasks at home just the same as if he had been here, he has missed his marks at school, and it would not be right for me to fix on him as the one most fit to have the prize, when one of his classmates has more marks than he."

He stopped, and there was a pause. No one spoke, but all knew that Jack Thorn was the one he meant. He took a box from the shelf, and set it on the stand in sight of all who were there. Then he went on :

“But it is time for me to show you what I have bought for you;” and he held up a watch with a white face. It was not gold, but it was a nice watch, for all that. The works were just as good as if the case had been of fine gold, and that is the great point in a watch. I have seen one set with pearls that did not keep time half as well as this plain one now shown by Mr. St. Clair.

“How do you like it, boys?” said he.

“It is grand—first rate,” some of them cried out. And the rest used words of strong praise when they spoke of it, but these words were too long to go in this book, so I cannot tell you what they were. You can judge what they ought to have been for your own selves.

“It is now time for me to state,” Mr. St. Clair went on to say, “that the boy who has had most good marks through the term is John Thorn. To him I make a gift of this watch.”

He held up the watch to Jack, who stepped out from his place in the ranks, took it with a bow, and said, "Thank you, sir."

Of course the boys came round him in a crowd to look at his gift, and were loud in their praise of it. It was a rare thing, in that small town, for a boy of twelve years old to have a thing as choice as that.

When Mr. St. Clair had let them have time to say their say out, he rapped on the stand as a sign that they should cease their talk. All stopped at once, and he told them he had something more to say.

"I did not think it fair," said this good man, "that Sam Hoyt, who is the best boy in my school, should lose this mark of my good-will when he has missed in school from an act for which we all praise him. For this cause I have bought one watch more, in all ways like the first one, and this I give to Sam for

the good deeds he has done both in and out of school. I have no fault to find with him."

You ought to have heard the shout of joy that burst forth from all lips and hearts when this speech was made and Sam went up to take the watch. He tried to speak, but the words stuck in his throat, his heart swelled, and he could only bow his thanks, for if he had tried to speak he would have burst into tears.

The boys cheered and cheered till Mr. St. Clair had to rap for them to stop. It seemed as if they would have alarmed the town with their noise. The friends, too, who had come to look on, were as much pleased as they were, and the whole scene was one of pure joy and good-will.

No, I am wrong; there was one voice that did not join in the glad cry—one heart that felt pain at Sam's good luck. Need I say whose these were? Poor Jack was so full of spite and ill-will that he

could have cried to hear the praise that was heaped on his schoolmate. He felt as if all this took just so much from him, for no one had cheered when the gift came to him, but took it as a thing of course. The fact was that since the rest of the boys had seen Jack treat his good friend with scorn and cold looks, they did not like him as well as they had once done. They took part with Sam, and though Jack was on good terms with them, yet his friendship with Ralph Hale, who did not go to school, took him off from his old playmates, and they now did not care much for him.

So Jack sulked and looked grave, and wished he were at home. He had a new watch, to be sure, but what good did it do him when he felt like this? He was glad when the crowd broke up, and he joined his friends and set out for home.

The next day his mother gave him a guard for the watch, and he wore it with great pride. It had to be shown to Ruth

and Dot, who had been snug in bed while all the fun took place in school. They stared at it with round eyes, and thought Jack must be a man now, or he could not have such a fine thing as that.

“Will it go?” asked Ruth in a tone of doubt.

“Go! I should think so!” said Jack as he showed her the small hand, which went round so fast you could see it move all the time.

“Let me hear it tick,” said Dot.

So he held it to her ear, and she looked wise and said, “It don’t make as much noise as the big clock out in the hall. Will it stwike ten?”

“No, you young goose!” said Jack, with a laugh. “It won’t strike at all; a watch is not made to strike. But it has one thing that the old clock don’t have—it has three hands, and that has but two.”


“And it has a stwing to hang it up by, and the clock has to stand on the floor,”

said Dot, who was wise in her own small way. "When I am gwown up to be a gweat big girl, shall I have a watch, too?"

"I guess you will, if you're good," said Jack. He had his doubts, but he did not like to dash her hopes to the ground so soon. To grow up and be a "great big girl," and have all that big girls had, and do all that big girls did, were the ends and aims of Dot's life.

PART VI.

OUT OF SCHOOL.

HE next time Jack was down town he went to a toy-shop and bought a small watch for Dot, for which he gave the sum of ten cents. It did not quite go, but it had a white face like that of his own watch, and black hands, and a brass case that looked to her just like gold, and a ring at the top which she could put a string through to go round her neck. She clapped her hands when she saw it, and said Jack was "weal good." She could not say "*r*" if it did not chance to come at the end of a word, or "*th*": so "thing" and "think" she called "fing" and "fink." But most words she could say quite well, and these were so droll that the rest did

not try to check her in them, but let her say them as she pleased.

All the schools in the place had a rest for the two hot months, and the girls and boys looked for fine times. Jack was now of an age to be of some use on the farm, and Mr. Thorn told him he must do some work there each day, and not spend all his time in play. He thought, too, that this would keep his son out of the way of Ralph Hale, whose ill deeds were the talk of the town, and who would be sure to do harm to a lad that was much with him. The love of truth and right was not in him, and all good men feared for their sons when he made friends with them.

Jack could not hold the plough, but he could drive as well as a man; and though most of this kind of work is done in the spring, yet there are some crops which are out of the ground by the last of June, and give place to such as will grow late in the fall. So Jack had his

hands full, though Mr. Thorn did not let him work more than was right for his strength. He had his times for play, and could stroll off with his friends and spend hours in sport when he had done what was laid out for his day's task.

“All work and no play
Makes Jack a dull boy,”

is a wise old saw that Mr. Thorn had full faith in, but he had one of his own which he thought quite as good, which was,

“Play tastes best
When work comes first,”

and his boys owned that this one came true.

For the girls Mrs. Thorn had the same rule, but she was so mild and kind in her ways that it scarce seemed like a rule to them. Mr. Thorn was strict with them all, and could be stern at times when they had not done right, but his wife was all sweet trust and love.

“Oh, mother! need I sweep my room *now?*” Grace asked one day when she

longed to go and play with her friend, Madge Earle, who lived not far off, in a back street.

"Why not, my dear Grace?" asked her mother, who was just then at work on a dress which Grace had torn on a nail, and which she must now spare time to mend, though she had so much else to do.

"Why, I don't know: I *hate* so to do it."

"But you know it must be done, do you not, my love?" said her kind mamma.

"I s'pose so," said Grace, who could not say "No," and did not like to say "Yes."

"Who shall do it, then, dear, if you do not?"

"I don't know, ma'am, but I don't think it needs to be done to-day. I might leave it just one day."

"And when the next day comes, which is the one you fixed upon for a visit to some of your young friends, do

you think you would like to stop and do it first?"

"I don't know," said Grace, for the third time.

"*I* know," said Mrs. Thorn, "and I wish you would not say such things, for they are not quite true. You *do* know, and when you say you do not, it makes me feel sad. You know that when the time came for you to start out, and you had to wait, first to use the broom, then to leave the room till the dust had had time to get still, and then to dust it and fix it up, you would feel far worse than you do now."

Grace did not move, but sat like a block of wood. She could not make up her mind to do as she ought, and tried to put it off as long as she could.

"Each day has its own work," said Mrs. Thorn, "and if we do not do it *on* the day, it comes twice as hard to us. So I want my dear girl to go now and get her broom and dust-cloth, and not let me see

her till the whole is done, and well done. *Then* I shall be glad to have her with me once more."

Grace left the room at this, for she had been taught that when she was told to do a thing she must do it. Her mother had not told her at first to sweep the room, but tried to make her see that it was best to do it. Now she saw that there was no use in this, so she had to be firm. If Mr. Thorn had been there, Grace would not have dared to say a word.

"Why do you mend such a small hole?" said Ruth, who stood near and saw her mamma at work on the torn dress.

"Have you not heard folks say, Rue, that a stitch in time saves nine?" said Mrs. Thorn.

"I think not," said Ruth. "That's a rhyme, isn't it?"

"It was meant for a rhyme," said Mrs. Thorn, "but it is a poor one. *M* and *n*

will not rhyme. I can tell you a verse that does rhyme, though, and you may learn it if you want to. It is one I have known since I was nine years old, and I should like you to know it, too."

"I shall be nine my next birth-day," said Ned, who had just come in and heard the last words.

"Yes, sir; and do you know how far off that is? You will have to wait six months for it yet. But you can learn the verse, too. Now both of you say it with me:

'I like little pussy, her coat is so warm,
And if I don't hurt her, she'll do me no harm,
So I'll not pull her tail, nor drive her away,
But pussy and I very gently will play;
She shall sit by my side and I'll give her some food,
And she'll love me because I am gentle and good.'"

Mrs. Thorn made them say this two or three times, till they knew it quite well, and told them they must speak it for their father when he came home.

"But I have some work for two pairs

of small hands that I know of," said she when they had done. "I want my wood-box filled. Who will do it for me?"

"I will," said Ruth. "And I will," said Ned, for this was a job they both liked.

"That's right. You can do it both at once. Rue can help Ned, and Ned can help Rue. Fill it full to the top, so there is not a chink left as large as a peanut."

"And I will help bofe of dem," said Dot, who wished to try each new thing that she heard of, and thought things could not go on if her small thumb was not in the pie.

"I think it's more safe for you to stay with me," said Mrs. Thorn, who feared they would not take quite such good care of Dot as she did, but would throw sticks of wood on her hands, or hurt her in some way.

"You fink I can't do de least fing," said Dot, and looked so hurt at this want

of faith in her that Mrs. Thorn could not hold out.

"I'll tell you what you *can* do for me, Dot," said she, "and you shall, if you want to. Fill the green box with chips for me to light the fire with."

"Fank you, ma'am," said Dot, and bobbed her head with what she meant for a bow. "I'll do it, ma'am, wite along."

So she went off in great style, but when the box was not more than half full she gave up, and came back to Mrs. Thorn, who said to her:

"Tired so soon, my own?"


"No, ma'am," said Dot, "but I fink dere's nuff chips for one day, and I fought p'waps you'd like to see me."

"So I do, duck;" and her mother kissed her, and took her on her lap, and told her the tale of "The man in the moon" who "came down too soon."

In a short time Dot's bright eyes closed, and Mrs. Thorn laid her in her crib for a good long nap.

PART VII.

JACK GOES WRONG.

HE warm days passed by with no great change to our friends at Stowe, and as it drew near the fall, now and then there would come a cool, sharp day which brought to mind the fact that play-time would soon be past and school-days come back. The wheat, rye, and oats were all in, the hay had been cut a long time, and the corn stood tall and fresh and green, not yet ripe to be pulled from its stalk, husked, and piled up in the corn-crib for use in the cold days yet to come.

One day, when Jack had gone off for a walk and no one knew where he was (for Mr. Thorn would not watch his son, but thought it best to trust him at all

times), he took once more the path that led to the hut on top of the hill, where he was to meet Ralph Hale.

This place was so far from the town that they could feel sure they were not to be seen; and it was so high that if one they did not want to see came up they could see him far off, go out by the back way, and be out of sight by the time he was near the hut. So it was a good place to meet and talk in, but a bad place for Jack, who knew that he did wrong each time that he went up there.

There was a kind of charm in Ralph that it was hard to flee from. When he chose, he could be frank and gay and kind, too, in his way, so that all liked to be with him. It was not till you knew to what a base use his gifts could be put that you felt shy of him. He had great skill in all kinds of sport; could beat the best of the boys when they played ball; and could shoot or row or fish, so that none of them could come up with him.

But this was not all; he would cheat or lie if it served his turn, and swear at all times, and would take what was not his own, and feel no shame when he was found out. Where good boys would have liked to sink through the floor, or hide their heads in some hole, he would laugh, and think it a good joke that he had been caught at a poor man's hen-roost, or his wife's line of clean clothes which had been washed and hung out to dry. So it is not odd that those who knew of his tricks should shrink from him with dread.

On the day of which we speak he got to the hut first, and sat down to wait till Jack should come in. He had been up late at night, and as he had to wait for some time, he thought he would lie down on the floor for a nap. As he did so a knife rolled out from his clothes, not seen by him, and fell on the ground by his side.

He had not slept long when Jack

came up, quite out of breath, for he knew he was late, and had walked fast to make up for lost time.

“Hi! Ralph!” said he when he saw the boy stretched out at full length, “wake up!”

“Oh, it’s you, is it!” said Ralph when he turned and saw him. He rose to his feet, and as he did so the knife was left in plain sight.

“Ha! what’s that?” called out Jack, and sprang to pick it up. Quick as thought, Ralph stooped for it, seized it, and put it in its place with the words, “It’s mine; it dropped out when I went to sleep.”

“It looks just like the one I lost last spring,” said Jack. “Let me see it, won’t you?”

“No, I won’t,” said Ralph in a rough tone. “Why should I? “It is not yours.”

“Well, I’d like to, just to set my mind at rest,” urged Jack. “I should think

you might let me. What harm would it do you?"

"I don't choose to, that's all. What's mine's my own, and I mean to keep it. I'll show it to no one."

Jack felt sure that the knife was his, but it would have been of no use to say so, and might have led to a fight; and as Ralph was a tall, strong boy, Jack would have had no chance at all; so as he did not care to risk a black eye or a bruised cheek, and did not want his teeth knocked out, he said no more.

"We shall have some fine sport to-night," said Ralph when he had gained his point. "Come and meet us at the big tree by Snow's barn, at half-past ten o'clock, will you?"

"What do you mean to do?" asked Jack.

"Oh, we'll tell you when you get there," said Ralph. "No need to know now. Will you come or not?"

"I should like to know first what the

sport's to be," said Jack, who had his doubts as to the kind Ralph meant.

"Well, you won't find out till you come to the place," said the boy. "If you're such a poor sneak you can't take us on trust, you may stay at home. We want boys with some spunk in them to join us."

Jack longed to say, as he thought, "I want to know if you mean to do what is wrong," but shame kept back the truth from his lips, and he tried to seem at ease.

"I can't say just yet," said he at last. "I'd like to come if I can get off. But you know the old man may be 'round, and if so, I can't stir."

Ralph laughed a loud horse-laugh. "Tied to its dad's coat-tails!" said he. "Well, well, if its dad won't let it tum out, it must stay home and be put to bed at dark, so it must!"

"Hold your tongue!" cried Jack in great wrath. "No one shall talk so to

me. I'll come if I choose, and if I don't I won't."

"All right," said Ralph, who did not want to push him too far. "We'll look for you at half-past ten sharp, and if you're not there, we'll wait till you come, so don't fail. Go round by the road back of the house, and keep well in the shade, for the moon is full to-night. The gate creaks, so you must climb the fence; it's not high, and you'll run less risk."

They had some more talk, but it did not come to much, and when Ralph left him at the foot of the hill, Jack had given his word to meet this bad boy and his friends, and have what they called "prime fun."

He had not gone far when his heart smote him, and he wished he had not said those weak words, but had told Ralph at once that he would not go if he was to be thus left in the dark as to their plan. None of them could have blamed him for this, and he would not have had

this weight at his heart. But it was too late now; he had said he would go, the boys would wait for him, and he must keep his word.

Ah, poor weak boy! You cannot guess what grief and shame are in store for you, or you would yet take back that rash "Yes," and take your stand on the broad, firm ground of right.

In this mood Jack went home. His heart felt like lead in his breast, his breath came quick and fast, and he would have given worlds, had they been his to give, not to have done the acts of the past hour.

When he drew near the gate, he heard Mrs. Thorn's sweet voice as she sang to the girls, to whom this was a great treat. He sat down in the porch where he could hear the words, which were these:


"Oh had I the wings of a dove I would fly
Far, far from this world of care;
My soul would mount to the realms on high,
And seek for a refuge there."

“I wish *I* had a good pair of wings,” thought Jack as he heard this. “I’d fly as far off as I could get, and as fast as I could go out of the way of this bad job. I wish I’d been drowned in the Red Sea when I was born! I can’t tell now what made me do so. But it *is* done, and I’ve got to make the best of it.”

He sat down with the rest, but felt all the while as if their eyes could see straight through the thin veil with which he tried to hide his thoughts, and as if each ear could hear his heart beat. Pit-a-pat it went, so loud and so fast it was all he could do to catch his breath and not show what ailed him. No one took note of him; the talk went on as it did six days in the week, and not a word was said that need have caused his fright; but the ways of sin were new to him, and they pressed him hard. He was glad when it came time to say “Good-night,” and he was free to go to bed.

PART VIII.

THE NIGHT WALK.

 F course there was no sleep for Jack that night. He lay with his eyes stretched wide, and his ears quick to note each sound in the house. How long the time seemed! He had to wait till all was still, and Mrs. Thorn had been to each child's bed and left a kiss on its cheek. His heart smote him as he felt her warm lips on his face, for he had shut his eyes when he heard her light step near his door. But one bad deed leads to more, and when his foot was in the path of wrong, he could not, or thought he could not, draw it back.

At last all was hushed. One by one the sounds stopped, the lights were put out, and he judged that it was safe for him to get up. He slid out of bed with

great care, for Ned was by his side; though he need have had no fears on that score, for Ned's sleep was so sound you would have found it hard to wake him unless you had fired off a gun close to his ear. Then he put on his clothes so as not to be heard out of the room, and with one glance at Ned, who had not stirred, he stole to the door with his shoes in his hand, for he feared that they might creak as he went down stairs if he put them on first.

He found he could turn the knob and yet make no noise, which was a piece of great good luck, he thought. Step by step he went down the stairs, and gained the back door; when he had once passed through this and stood on the firm ground, he felt quite safe.

Ah, Jack, *are* you safe? Would it not be best to go back now, and brave the taunts of those bad boys who wish to lure you on to your own harm and loss? Think of it, dear boy, once more!

But he would not stop to think. His mind was made up to go on in this bad course, and he was not to be turned back from it. He must work out his own fate.

He sat down on the door-step to put on his shoes, for the ground was wet with dew. It was one of the first nights of fall, but the frost had not yet come. The air was keen but clear, and the world looked most fair, bathed in the soft, bright light of the full moon. Here and there a small star peeped out, but it looked pale, and did not make much show by the side of the great round orb that poured forth such a flood of light. All things took their hue from this: trees, roof, grass, all had a kind of white sheen which is not to be seen in the day-time. It was a night to charm the eye and fill the good, pure soul with joy.

But for a heart full of guilt the fair scene had no charm. Each crook in the fence seemed as if it might hide a spy who would jump out and cry "Halt!" to

Jack. He thought he saw forms perched in the trees, and branch and bough took shapes of fear to haunt him as he went by. The slight creak made by the gate in the back yard seemed to him ten times as loud as it was; and the low growl Prince the dog gave when he felt Jack pat him on the head was worse than the howl of a wild beast. But at last the gate was closed, and he was out in the lane, with no eye to watch and no tongue to tell of him.

No eye, Jack? You know that there is one Eye that sleeps not night or day, and *that* can see as well when all is dark as in the broad light of noon. It sees you now; but you do not wish to think of it, and so you thrust it from your mind. But it keeps watch of you all the same.

He did not meet a soul on the way, for in that place most kept good hours; and those who were not out on ill deeds were at home in their beds. A few lights

could still be seen, faint and dim, but for one house so marked there were ten where all was dark; and Jack's step grew more firm as he passed them and felt sure he should meet no one.

Mark Snow, near whose barn the boys were to meet, owned a fine farm on which was the pond I have told you of where Jack and Sam went for a boat-row and had to put up with a bath. He had a lot filled with fruit trees, and these trees were full of fruit; so there was a good deal to tempt men and boys who were not too good to steal. But Mr. Snow kept a fierce dog, who was let loose at night; and who, if he once fell on a man, would not leave him in doubt as to what had hurt him. There was no one in the place who did not fear this dog; and the fame of him had gone so far that few dared to rob the trees which he was set to guard.

A walk of less than half an hour brought Jack to the place Ralph had

named to him, and there he found this king of bad boys, with five or six more whom he would have liked to teach to be as bad as he was. Most of these Jack knew by sight; but they came from a low set, and he would not have cared to be seen on good terms with them in the day-time.

"Here you are at last!" said Ralph to him as he came up. "Well, now you've come, we'll be off."

"Be off where?" asked Jack. "You have not told me that yet."

"Oh, for a row on the pond!" said Ralph. "You see it's a fine night for it, and we're bound to have some sport."

"But we shall be seen," urged Jack, who thought this a queer way to do things by stealth.

"No, we sha'n't; we shall keep close in shore, and be in the shade of the trees all the way."

"All the way where?" asked Jack, who suspected mischief, and who did

not like to be kept in the dark, like a child.

“Why, to the end of the pond, of course.”

“But what’s the use of that, and what shall we do when we get there?”

“Now, look here,” said Ralph in a voice which, though low, was harsh and fierce. “You shut up, or it will be the worse for you. I’m boss of this trip, and what the rest of you have got to do is to mind me and not kick up a row. When you’re boss, I’ll do just as *you* say.”

“I sha’n’t go a step till I know what you mean to do,” said Jack, who was full of rage at Ralph’s tone. “I shall go back, and you may do what you like.”

“You’ll go back, will you?” sneered Ralph. “You’ll do no such thing. Boys, if he turns tail, you know what to do with him. So you think you can come out as far as this and spy on us, and

then go back and tell, do you? No, sirree! You're in for it now, and you've got to stick by the boat, sink or swim."

"Of course I should not tell," said Jack. "What do you mean by that? But I don't like to be dragged in when you won't tell me what it's for. That's all I want."

"It's just what you won't have," said Ralph. "We won't trust you not to tell; and now you're in for it, the best thing for you will be to hold your tongue and do as you're told."

Jack knew it would be of no use to strive, for they were six to one, and all in league with Ralph; so he kept still, but made up his mind that they should not use his hands to steal, for that was what he felt they had come out to do.

"Where's Snow's big dog?" he asked as they moved off to the edge of the pond.

"Oh, Bill Smart did *his* work for him two hours back," said Ralph. "He gave

him a dose that cured his bark once for all. Look there!" and in the shade made by the barn Jack saw the form of the dog stretched stark and stiff on the ground.

"What! you killed him!" he cried out, shocked so that he could scarce frame the words. "Shame! shame on you! What a mean trick! Poor Bounce!" and he stroked the poor dead dog as if he could feel the touch.

"Come, that won't do," said Bill Smart, a low wretch whom Jack, to use his own phrase, "would not have touched with a pair of tongs." "Let's get off quick, or this milksop will spoil all our fun. Come on!" and the crew set out for the pond with Jack in the midst, half pushed, half dragged, but forced to keep up with the rest. The boat was in its place, and a pair of oars lay on the shore near by.

"I thought Snow kept his oars locked up in the barn?" said Jack when he saw them.

"So he does," said one of the boys, "but we found a place where there was a plank loose, so we pulled it off, and Beanpole went in and got them."

This Beanpole was a tall, slim boy to whom his mates gave this nickname. He had a mild face, and Jack thought did not look quite as bad as the rest.

"What are those bags for?" asked Jack, at the sight of some large bags made of duck, which were laid on the seats to keep them out of the wet.

"We brought those to tie up spies in," said Ralph, with a grim laugh. "With one of those drawn down to your waist, and tied tight, you can't make much noise when we chuck you head first into the pond."


Jack had no fear that he should be chucked in the pond, but his whole soul loathed the mates he was joined with and the work they were bound on. He had been weak and had done wrong, no

doubt, but he was not so bad as this, and he thought he would give a hand or an eye to be put back to the time when he went to bed that night.

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PART IX.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

HE boat kept, as Ralph had said, in the shade of the trees, and no one said a word on the way. The two boys at the oars plied them with swift, sure strokes, and made good time, though it seemed long to Jack, who was half dead with shame at the part he was made to play. They passed the first lot of trees, from which the fruit had been picked, and drew up to land at a place where rows of fine pear trees, full of fruit, came down to the brink of the pond.

“Here’s a good deep place,” said one as they pushed to the shore. “Jump out now, and I’ll make a hole in her that will let her down in no time;” and

the young thief seized an axe that had been brought for this use, and raised his hand for the first blow.

“Stop! quit that!” cried Jack, at the sight of this new crime. “Why can’t you leave it where it is? What do you want to sink it for?”

“Ho! ho! what a greenhorn!” said Ralph. “A fine thing it would be to leave it here to tell tales, and get us tracked out! No, thank you! Look here, boys! this chap won’t help us, and I think we may as well put him out of harm’s way first as last. If we don’t, he’ll give us leg-bail while we’re spread round in the trees, and run back and tell Snow, and the first thing we know, back he will come and catch us!”

With this, he gave a wink to Bill Smart, who drew out a strong cord, with which the two tied Jack’s hands so tight that he screamed with pain, and begged them to make it more loose; then they made him put his foot in a slip-noose,

which they made firm, and then tied the end of the rope round Bill's leg, so that Jack could not get far off from him. The rope was six or eight feet long, and Jack had to keep up with Bill and go just where he led him.

For an hour or more the boys worked on, till they had filled their bags with the ripe fruit, and then Jack hoped they would start for home, but their cup of sin was not yet full. At the end of the lot where the pear trees were, stood a small house, or what seemed more like a shed, where lived a poor soul who had but few of this world's goods, and earned what kept her in life by the sale of eggs and hens which she raised. She had but one child, a poor lame boy, who walked with a crutch, and for him she toiled night and day, glad of all work by which she could eke out her poor fare. To her house these vile boys now bent their steps. Jack could not but guess what they meant to do there, and once more

he raised his voice to plead for the poor lone thing.

It was all in vain; he might as well have cried to the winds. They stole round the hut to the low shed where she kept all her goods, and left not one thing which could be of use to her. Ralph had climbed up on the roof to see if some nests were not hid there in the straw; the rest stayed for him to come down, when all at once a sound broke in on the still night air. It was the voice of Mark Snow.

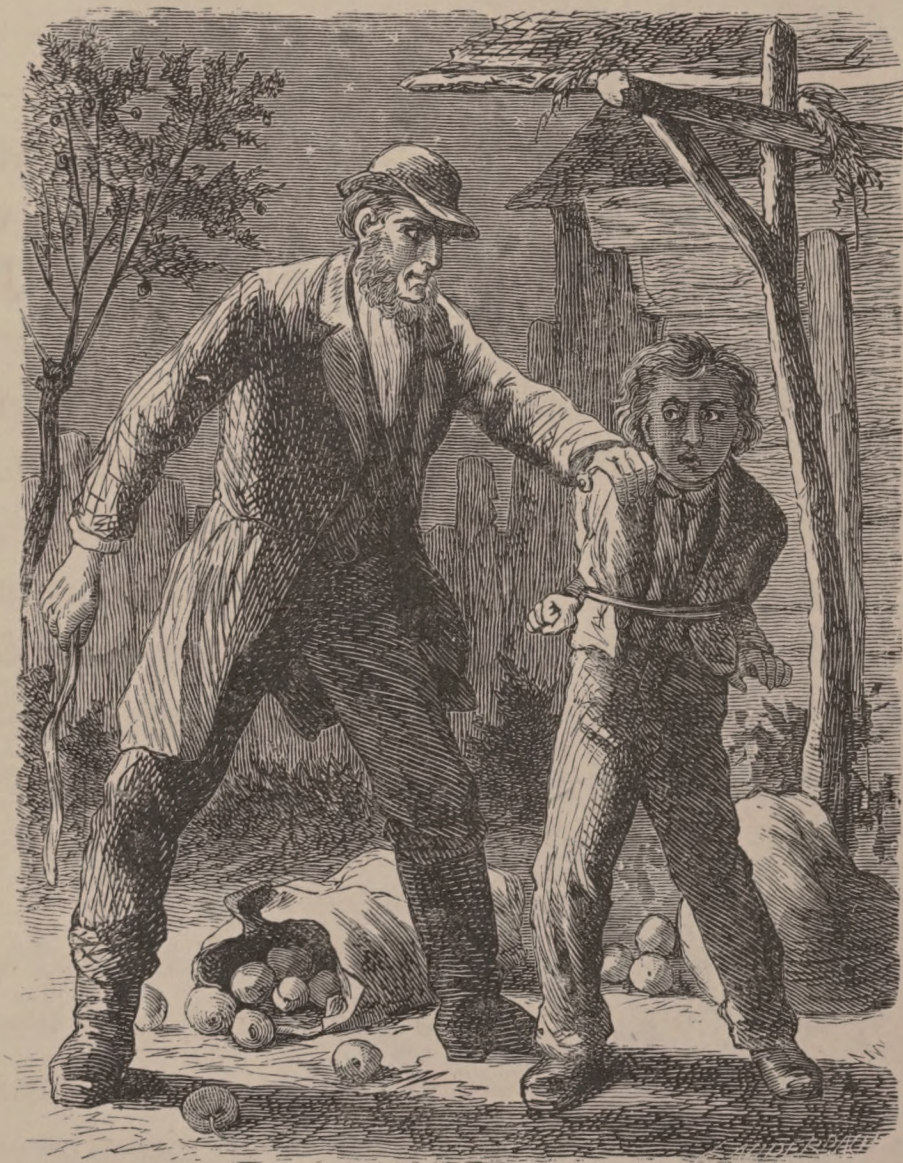
“Ah, you knaves! I’ve caught you at it, have I?” said he, and seized hold of Beanpole, who stood near him. This youth wrenched his arm out of Snow’s grasp, and fled like the wind, while the man caught hold of the next one, who chanced to be Jack Thorn. Bill, at the first sound, had cut the ropes with which Jack was tied, and run with all his might, as did all the rest. As Jack did not try to run, Snow held him fast and

gave up the rest, who were now out of his reach, all but Ralph, of whom we have something else to tell.

When he first heard Snow speak he was on the roof of the shed, and tried to spring to the ground and run, for he was fleet of foot, and might have got off. But his heel caught in a hole in the roof; he missed his hold and was pitched to the ground, where he struck on his head with such force as to make him lose all sense. He lay there like one dead, and as Snow did not go round on that side, he did not know it, for he had seen the rest run, and thought they had all gone but Jack. So Ralph was left where he fell.

“You young scamp!” said Snow, who kept fast hold of Jack’s arm, and was a tall, strong man, so that he held him as if in a vice, “I’m glad I’ve caught *you*, though I had to let the rest go. I’ll make you smart for this! A fine thing it will be to tell of Thorn, the head man in the

Jack Thorn's Knife.



"You young seamp!" said Snow, "I'm glad I've caught you."

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church, that his son steals fruit and robs hen-roosts at night with a lot of the worst boys in town. You'll catch it, sir!"

"I did not come to steal," gasped Jack, who could not till now get a chance to speak, for so great was the man's rage that his words poured out like a flood. "I thought they just came out for fun to have a ride in the moonlight, maybe, or a row on the pond, and when I found that they were up to worse tricks, I tried to go back and leave them, but they would not let me, and tied up my hands and feet, and made me go with them by force. I have not touched a thing; I give you my word for it."

"Ha! ha!" roared Snow, who was not a bad man, but whose blood was all up now at the wrong done him. "That sounds true, don't it? *Your* word! it's like, now, ain't it? Don't try to gull *me* with your trumped-up tales. I'll take it out of you yet. Come here, Tom," he called to a man who came from the shade

of the trees. This man had set out with Snow, but could not keep up with his long, swift strides. "Lay hold of this young chap while I teach him how to steal my fruit."

All Jack's cries and prayers did him no good; he had a foe to deal with whose heart could not be moved; and Snow, who had brought a rawhide with him, laid it on the lad's back till his shrieks brought out Mrs. Van Cott from her bed.

"Stop, stop, Snow!" she cried when she saw them; "you'll kill the boy! For mercy's sake, stop, or there won't be a whole bone left in his skin!"

"You look in your hen-house and see what he and his mates have done there if you want to know what he's got to catch it for," said Snow, while he kept up his blows just the same.

"I don't care! You sha'n't kill him while I'm here to look on!" she screamed, and clung with her whole weight to his right arm, so that he could not use the

whip. He was tired, too, so he flung poor Jack to the ground with an oath, and bid him lie there while he looked round to see how much of his fruit he could get hold of.

“If you stir one step, I’ll shoot you dead!” he called out as he moved off. “I’ve got my eye on you.”

But Jack was in no mood to stir. Sore and bruised, faint from pain, and crushed by shame, he was glad to be just let lie there. He wished he could die on the spot; he felt as if he could not face his friends, and thought it would have been well for him if Snow had done as Mrs. Van Cott had said, and killed him where he stood.

The good wife had a soft heart, and could not bear to think of the pain the boy was in. She stooped down and laid her hand on him, and said:

“Come in my house, lad, and rest. They’ll not touch you if they see I’m with you. Your folks have been so good

to me I don't like to see you on the ground like a dead dog."

"No, I'll stay here if you please," said Jack in a faint voice. "I don't want to go in the house. Don't mind me."

The men now came back from their search. They had found all the bags of fruit, for the thieves had to run so fast they could take no weight with them; the eggs, too, were all safe, but the necks of the fowls were wrung, for fear of noise, and but few were left of the fine brood that had been nursed with such care.

"The Lord will take care of me," she sobbed as she saw the wreck of her goods. "He's good to the poor and lone, and he'll not leave me now."

Her voice was choked with tears, and Jack was glad when one of the men told him to get up and go with them, and Snow told Mrs. Van Cott to have a care of the fruit till he called for it the next day.

PART X.

JACK GOES HOME.

MR. SNOW took Jack by the arm, and marched him by his side as if he were on his way to jail, but the boy was too weak and sore to care much what was done with him. Each step caused him pain, but he made no sound, and dragged on as well as he could. Snow saw that his lame gait was real, and when the first heat of his rage had passed off, he made his own steps slow, so that Jack got on with more ease. The farm-hand left them at the barn, and the two kept on their way, for it was plain that Snow did not mean to let go his hold.

None of them had seen Ralph, for a fence ran close back of the shed, and he

fell on the ground on the outside of this, while the bags of fruit and spoil of all kinds were found on the side next Mrs. Van Cott's house. The boys had leaped the low fence and gone off through the woods, and as Snow saw them do this, he did not think it worth while to look on that side at all, for he knew they must be far out of reach. Jack knew no more of it than he did, so Ralph was left where he fell.

Jack hoped that Mr. Snow would take him to his own gate, and leave him there to make his way into the house, but the man had not the least thought of this. He shut the gate with a loud snap, walked straight up to the house, and round to the path which led to the front gate.

"Look here, Thorn!" he called out in a loud voice. "See what I've brought you!" And soon Mr. Thorn's head looked out from the sash, and the pale face of his wife, in her white cap and gown, was seen at his side.

“What is it?” he asked in a maze of doubt. Jack’s head was dropped upon his breast, so that his face did not show.

“Here’s this nice boy of yours I caught in my fruit, and at Ma’am Van Cott’s hen-house. There were four or five more with him, but they ran off, so I took him in hand and gave him what will make him think of me for some time yet.”

With this he went off, and did not wait for Mr. Thorn to come down and take his son. In the hall Jack found his poor mother, who threw her arms round his neck, and sobbed out, “Oh, my son, how could you? how *could* you?”

“I didn’t! Just wait till you hear me!” cried Jack; and then he told them the whole truth, just as it was—how he stole off to meet Ralph, when he did not know what was to be done, but thought there would be some sport; how he tried to draw back when he found out their base plan, but was forced to go with them;

and how he took no part in their theft, but tried to do what he could to stop them.

Mr. and Mrs. Thorn both knew that their son spoke the truth ; it was not one of his faults to tell lies, though he did things that were far from right: but they could trust his word. Mr. Thorn took him by the hand and led him to his own room ; his wife would have gone in too, but he held her back. "No more talk to-night," he said. "Go to bed, my son ; when we have slept on this it will be time to think what ought to be done. Kneel down and ask God to blot out your sins. I hope what you have gone through to-night will save you from more shame in time to come."

He shut the door, and left Jack, with a sore heart and aches in all his bones, to get what rest he could.

The next day Jack found it hard to move, his limbs were so stiff and full of pain. Mr. Thorn thought he had had

all the stripes that were his due, and did no more than talk to him in a grave, sad way of his faults, and how he could get rid of them. He showed him how all this had come from his acts to his good friend, Sam Hoyt.

“If you had not formed a doubt of him,” said Mr. Thorn, “and gone on like a fool at the time you lost your knife, this state of things could not have come to pass. You do not still think him a thief, do you?”

“No, sir,” said Jack, with a downcast look. “I’m sure he is not. I think Ralph has the knife, though I don’t know how he got it.”

“Take care,” said Mr. Thorn. “Do not give way to more doubts, which may be as false as those were. Keep your thoughts in your own mind, and wait till something turns up to prove you right. If you have no proof, tell no one what you think. And now do you know what is the first thing you ought to do?”

"Make up with Sam, sir?" asked Jack.

"Yes," said Mr. Thorn. "If Mr. Snow had let you go, I should not let a day pass till you had been to him and owned your fault, for you were all wrong when you used his land to meet on, but as he took the law in his own hands, you are clear of him. But you can't find Sam too soon and tell him how you have changed your mind."

But Jack had no chance to do this, for Sam was then at the gate. He had heard of his school-mate's bad case, and came to see how he was.

The two boys shook hands with all their old warmth, and Jack tried to tell his friend how he felt at the thought of his misdeeds.

"Don't mind that!" said Sam. "It's all past now, and we won't think of it. But did you know Ralph fell from the shed and broke his leg last night?"

"Why, no!" said Jack. "I thought he ran off, like the rest."

“No,” said Sam. “He was on the roof when Snow came up, and tried to jump off, but his foot caught, and he pitched off and struck on his head, and that was the last he knew for a long time. When he came to, all the rest were gone, and he was there on the ground, in the field back of the hen-house, with his leg all bent up like a bow. He tried to get up, but it hurt him so he screamed out with the pain, and found he could not move, and he had to lie there till daylight, when Mrs. Van Cott came out to see to her chicks. She heard him groan, and had to look round a good deal to find out where he was. She could not lift him, and he could not walk, so she took down two or three rails of the fence, and dragged him in, with his own help and Jim’s, to the house. I tell you what, he had a tight pull for his life.”

“Where is he now?” asked Jack.

“At his own house. Ma’am Van Cott

went down there as soon as she could and told Hale, and he came with a horse and cart and took him home. Dr. Wise set his leg, but he says he thinks it will be hard to cure, for Ralph got chilled through on the cold ground, and will have a bad time of it. Serves him right, though, if he does."

Jack did not speak; the thought of all that had passed was too much for him, and he wished they could talk of something else. Sam saw this, and turned the talk to school, where they would have to go the first of the next week, for play-time was done, and they called back past times and made plans for times to come, till Jack's heart grew more light, and he felt like his old self once more.

PART XI.

HELP FOR THE POOR.

DON'T you think, dear," said Mr. Thorn's wife to him that day, "that we ought to try to do something for poor Jane Van Cott? That was a great loss to her last night, for she has to take her fowls to the shops and sell them for what she can get, and they were all she had to live by."

"By all means," said Mr. Thorn. "I think the best way would be for you and Grace to go out and see what you can get for her in town, and then we can fill up with what she needs most. We can spare two or three hens, I think, and I will draw her a load of wood as soon as I get time."

So when they had dined, Mrs. Thorn

took Grace and Ned, and set out on a tramp round town. They did not get much, for those who lived there were plain folks and had not much to spare, but all who were well off gave something, and the young ones soon had as much as they could lift.

What Mrs. Thorn thought most of in these gifts was the fowls to take the place of those which had been killed. Mrs. Van Cott knew how to make her hens lay eggs all the year round, and she sold these at a high price when it was cold and they were hard to get. So some, who did not care to feed their hens and keep them round till spring, gave one or two from their store with great good-will. Here and there some one who had no food or clothes to spare gave a ten-cent piece, and Mrs. Thorn felt that she was well paid for her day's work.

The next day Jack and Sam went with her to take the things to poor Jane.

It was the last of the week, and as they were to go to school in two days more, it was well that they should spend their last free day in good works. All three had as much as they could lift, and it was with glad hearts that they stopped at Mrs. Van Cott's door.

They found her at work on some clothes for her boy, whom she taught as she sat and sewed. He was too lame to go to school, so she made him spell and read to her, and do sums on the slate. He was a bright boy, and would have learned fast if he could have gone to school.

"Good-day to ye!" said she when they came in. "I'm right glad to see ye! It's not often that I have a call, for I live so far out of the way. How's all at home?"

"We're all well, thank you," said Mrs. Thorn, "and much pained to hear what you lost by those bad boys."

"Yes, it *was* a loss!" said Jane. "But

poor Mr. Jack! Seemed to me I felt worse for him than for what they took from me. Snow's a brute, though I say it that ought not, for he lets me have this cot and piece of land low since my man died, and that shows his heart's not so bad; but when I saw him flog your boy, I felt as if I could kill him, it made me so mad!"

"I don't know that we ought to blame him," said Mrs. Thorn, "for he thought Jack was as bad as the rest, and of course he was in a rage when he found that his fine fruit was picked and his boat sunk in the pond. I dare say Mr. Thorn would have done the same in his place. He would have thought it was for the boy's good."

"But it wa'n't for his good to kill him," said Mrs. Van Cott with great warmth, "and that's what he was bound to do if he'd kept on that way. And what do you think I found to-day but the ropes they had your son tied with, right down

by the hen-house, just where they cut them and ran off!"

"I'm glad of that," said Jack. "Now Snow will know that I told him the truth when I said so. He would have it that I made it all up."

"He was here for the rest of his pears," said Jane, "and I showed them to him. Seemed like at first he couldn't take it in, but at last he out and said, 'Well, I guess the lad spoke the truth.' And I up and spoke out my mind as much as I dared, for I can't risk to be turned out, you know."

"You must not do that," said Mrs. Thorn. "Don't mind it now. It will be all right, and I don't think my son will give cause for more of such scenes. But we must show you what we have brought you."

The first thing she took out was a nice warm suit for Jim, whose clothes were thin and poor. These were not fresh or new, but they were whole, and would

last through all the cold days. At the sight of them Jane burst into tears.

"The Lord in heaven bless you!" she cried. "If ye'd have tried all through the world, ye'd not have found a thing I've wished for like that. See, Jim! What do ye say for it, now?"

"Thank you, ma'am," said Jim, who was a shy lad, and scarce dared to raise his eyes. "Them's real nice."

"They are not my gift," said Mrs. Thorn, with a smile. "Mrs. Ray gave them to me for you, as George had grown out of them. They'll be a nice fit, won't they?"

"That they will," said Jane, "or if they don't, I'll make 'em. I've just been at work on these old ones, with a patch here and a darn there, but they'll be soon gone, the best I can do. These were just what I had most need of for the poor child."

"There's a skirt for you from Mrs. Graves, and I put a sack to it and some

scraps that I think you can find use for ; old Mrs. Lee has sent you some tea, and John Bell says he'll give you a bag of flour, if you can call there for it, and here's a small purse we've made up for you. Now the boys must show you what they've got out of doors."

When Mrs. Van Cott saw the fine lot of fowls, she was wild with joy. "The Lord is good to me!" she said. "I knew he would be! He's raised me up such good friends as I ought not to be faint of heart. How *can* I thank ye? Seems as if words wa'n't no use!"

"Oh, don't thank us at all!" said Mrs. Thorn, in her sweet, kind voice. "In the first place, you know the things are not from us ; we begged all but a few of them from our friends."

"It's all the same!" said Jane. "If it had not been for you, I'd not have got them. It's you that's done it all."

"I'm glad I had the chance," said Mrs. Thorn. "Now there's one thing

more. Mr. Thorn says he'll draw a load of wood for you as soon as he has time, and I think I know two young men who will come and cut it up some day, when they have spare time on hand."

"Oh yes!" said both the boys in a breath. "And we'll bring up that bag of flour for you," said Sam, "some time to-day. You won't need to go for it."

"All I can say is, the Lord bless ye!" said Jane. "He'll pay it back to ye some way, for I'm sure I can't."

On their way home they met Mr. Snow, who jumped off his horse when he came near them

"Good-day, Mrs. Thorn," said he. "I've felt bad since I found Jack was tied up by those rogues, as he said, and had no hand in their work. But you must own I had ground for what I did, when I found him there with them, my dog killed, and my boat sunk, and my pears all packed in bags, to be snaked off if I had not got there just as I did!"

"I don't know that we can blame you, Mr. Snow," said she, in a grave, calm tone. "Of course we could have wished you to wait till you had more proof, when our son told you how it was that he was there."

"I'll leave it to any man in town," said Snow, "to say if I was not right, when I found a pack of thieves on my land, to catch and whip the first one I could find. How could I know that what he said was true? The case was clear as daylight, as far as I could see."


"Well, we'll not talk of it now," said Mrs. Thorn. "It's all past, and I hope my son will know how to choose his friends from this time, so that he will not be charged with what he has not done. Have you caught the thieves yet?"

"Some of them, and we shall get the rest. As for that scamp Ralph, it's a chance if he's out of bed these six months. It's a bad case, they say."

Jack felt sad to hear this, for he had been much with Ralph for the past three or four months, and knew that he had his good points as well as bad ones. He did not care to see him, but wished to know how he got on, and Sam said he would go and ask, and see what could be done for him.

PART XII.

RALPH AT HOME.

 HE next day, when church was done, Sam went down to where Hale lived, to ask how his son was. No one in town liked this man, who was what they called "a hard case," and it was not strange that his son should turn out one of the same sort. Black Hale (as he was called from his dark skin, though he had a good name of his own) did not work more than half the time, so, as might be looked for, his wife went in rags, and his sons walked in his steps.

His house was in a mean part of the town, where there were more of his own kind, and you could see by the looks of the place that none of them had been to

church that day. Dirt and rags were the chief sights; rough men and boys lounged on door-steps, or lay on beds which were not yet made up, while the women and girls, in torn and soiled clothes, moved with slow steps, as if they were dull and tired, and felt no 'spring in them to do their work.

Black Hale sat on a bench at his door. He had black hair, black eyes, a thick black beard, black hands (made so by want of soap), and smoked a black pipe. He gave a slight nod as Sam went up to the house through a gate which hung by one hinge, and by a path strewn with scraps of stone-ware, bones, and dirt of all kinds.

"How's Ralph to-day?" asked Sam, in his strong, clear voice. "Can I see him?"

"He's much the same," said Hale. "I s'pose you can see him if you've a mind to go in."

Sam did go in, and saw the sick boy

at the first glance, for there was but one room in the house. He was in bed, and Mrs. Hale stood near him, her eyes red and swelled, for she was fond of her bad boy. Ralph turned his eyes on Sam, but did not speak.

“How do you feel to-day?” asked Sam, when he had said good-day to Mrs. Hale. “Bad, eh?”

“Yes,” said Ralph, in a faint tone. It was strange to see the great, strong, rough boy brought so low as this. His head and hands were hot, his face flushed, and his eyes too bright for health. He tossed his arms and head from side to side of the bed, but could not move his legs, for the right one was bound up in splints, and had to be kept still, and in one position.

“Give me a drink, will you?” said he, and Mrs. Hale sprang to do as he asked. Sam took the glass and put it to his lips, and raised up his head with the left hand. Ralph took a sip and fell back,

with a look on his face as if his pain were too great to be borne.

"What is there I can do for him?" said Sam, whose soft heart ached at the sad sight. "I wish you'd tell me if you think he can be helped."

"I wish I had some ice," groaned Ralph. "Seems as if it would feel good on my head. It's so hot all the time."

"I'll try if I can get some for you from De Bow," said Sam. "I don't think he's out of it yet, and I know he'll give me some if I ask him."

He saw he could be of no more use, and rose to go. "I'll come back as soon as I can get the ice," said he to Mrs. Hale.

"Like as not he won't want it when it comes," she said, "he's so full of whims. But if he thinks he will, it's all the same."

There was no hope in her tone; each word seemed to drop from her mouth like lead. Sam tried to cheer her up, but she shook her head.

"There's no good in one on 'em," she said. "They're all bound to come to grief, soon or late. I tell Hale so, and I tell the boys so, but it don't do no good. They've all got to come to it."

"Don't you think that, Mrs. Hale," said Sam. "Just you wait, and see how bright Ralph will come out when he gets out of bed this time. You won't know him for the same boy, he'll be so good!"

She smiled at this—a sort of half smile, as if the sun should try to peep out when his face was so veiled in clouds that he could not quite make it out. Sam laughed, and told her that her son would show a good face in the world yet.

He could not go to De Bow till he had been home, for his aunt would wait lunch for him, and she liked him to be prompt. When he told her where he had been, she said she was glad of it, and would send Ralph some nice things to eat as soon as Dr. Wise said he could have them.

There was but one ice-house in the place, and this was owned by a man who kept the ice for sale. Sam went to him at once, for he knew that it was no sin to do good works on the Lord's day.

He found, as he thought, that all the folks had done with ice for that fall, and that there was some still left in the ice-house. He asked if he could have a small piece for Ralph.

"I'll pay for it," said he, for he knew it would cost but a few cents, and he had that sum of his own. But De Bow said he did not want pay.

"I don't know that there's a boy in town I'd trust but you," said he, "to go and take out the ice. But I know you won't waste it, and you'll take just what you need and no more, and you'll bring the key safe back to me when you've done with it."

"Yes," said Sam, "I'll do all that."

"Then you can have what Ralph needs as long as he's sick," said the man. "If

I'm not here, my wife will give you the key. I know I can trust you."

Sam thanked him, and took a small lump of ice down to Ralph's house at once. Mrs. Hale said she would take great care of it, and wrap it up in cloths, so that it should not waste. The next day, when school was done, Sam took his way once more to the same place.

"He ha'n't had e'er a thing yet," said Mrs. Hale, "that's done him so much good as that there ice. I keep it to his head all the time, 'most, and when a piece melts he wants more right straight off. And the doctor says it's the best thing for him, too."

Ralph was ill a long time, for his hurt had been far more than the harm done to his leg. That was the least part of it. Some of the time he was quite out of his head, and would rave all the while, and talk as if that night had come back, and he had to act it all once more.

Jack went to see him now and then,

and took him things he liked, for he would not leave him now he was down, he said. But not a day passed that Sam did not go and sit with him as long as he could, and do all in his power to make the time seem less sad.

At last all this took hold of Ralph's heart. He saw what a good thing it was to be just and kind, and he felt that he could not do too much for Sam, who had done so much for him. So one day he said to him,

"Just reach me that box from the shelf, will you?"

Sam gave it to him, and he took from it the long-lost knife and put it in his hand.

"There!" said he. "That's off my mind now. I was in Thorn's wood-shed the day you and Jack went up to the pond, and I saw it down in the chips. No one was near there, so I just marched off with it, for I thought it was a nice one, and I'd like to have it, and that if

Jack had left it there he could not think much of it. But then he thought you took it, and since you've been so good to me I can't keep it from you, so there it is."


Sam's heart leaped for joy at this, and he wrung Ralph's hard hand with all his might. "I'll take it straight to Jack," said he.

"Yes, I wish you would," said Ralph, "and tell him I don't mean to be on such jobs as that when I get well. I'll try to turn round and act on the square, and maybe I'll hold up my head with the best of you yet."

We need not tell the kind words Sam said to him, nor how, when Ralph did get well, he was as good as his word, and turned back from his bad ways and grew up to be an excellent man. But we must go with Sam when he takes back the knife to his friend.

PART XIII.

GOOD-BYE.

HE Thorns were all at tea when Sam got there, and he walked in where they were and sat down with them.

“I have something for you, Jack,” said he—“something you’ll like, too. Guess what it is.”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Jack. “There are such lots of things I’d like that I can’t tell which one it is.”

“*I* know,” said Grace, “it’s a new book.”

“No, it’s a pair of skates,” said Ned.

“What do you guess, Ruth?”

“Gum-drops,” said Ruth, who thought few things as nice as this kind of sweets.

“What do you say, Dot? What have

I got here for Jack that he'll like, oh, so much?"

"If it's somefing weal good," said Dot, who grew more wise from day to day, "I fink it must be a knife."

"Dot's found it out!" cried Sam. "She knows more than you all. Look here, Jack!" and he held up the knife where all could see it.

"Where *did* you get it?" asked Jack. "That's the last thing I thought to see you bring out. I had it in my mind, too, but I wouldn't say so."

Then Sam told how Ralph gave it to him, and what he said, and they were all pleased to hear such good news, though Jack felt a hot flush come on his face when he thought of what he had said that day.

"I'll keep an eye on Ralph," said Mr. Thorn, "and if he does try to mend, I'll help him on all I can. You may tell him, Sam, that when he gets well I'll try to find some work for him."

From this time Jack began to save up his spare cash in a way that his young friends had not known him do till now. Mr. Thorn gave him small sums from time to time, and these he had been used to spend with a free hand. But now, when he got a few cents, off they went to his cash-box, and he left his purse at home, for fear something would tempt him to spend what he did not want to.

Now and then, when Grace or Ned would ask what he meant to do with all this, he would say, "You'll see; I shall put it to a good use," and would tell them no more.

"What will he do with it all?" said Ned to Grace one day. "He's got, oh, I don't know how much locked up in his box."

"I fink he'll buy a knife wiz it," said Dot, who had made such a good guess the first time that she thought she would try the same one now. And then she went to

put her doll Mug to bed in her own crib, where Mug lay quite still all night. One day Grace saw her take a small switch and strike Mug with it four or five times. "What's that for, Dot?" she asked. "Mug been bad to-day?"

"Not to-day, but las' night," said Dot. "She cried and screamed so she kept me 'wake mos' all night. And I mus' whip her, so she won't do so 'gain."

"Poor Mug!" said Grace. "If you were whipped as much as she is, what a good girl you'd be, Dot!"

"No," said Dot, with a shake of her head that made the curls fly like leaves in a high wind. "It's good for Mug, but it's not good for me."

"Not when you pull the cork out of the inkstand, and tip all the ink out on your new dress, and throw the hair-brush in the stove, and hide the door-key where no one can find it?"

"You mustn't talk of dose fings," said Dot. "I'm a gweat big girl now, and

know how to 'have good. Mother says she won't punch me when I don't mean to be bad."

Dot meant punish, but "punch" was as near as she could get to it.

When it came near the end of the year, school was let out for a week, so that all could play, and Mrs. Thorn said that now would be a good time to give Jim Van Cott some fun. So one day, when Mr. Thorn did not need the horse, Jack took it to Jane's house, and brought the lame boy back with him, and a fine time they had.

The girls swung him in the great swing, showed him their books and play-things, and gave him some to take home with him, for they had been taught to share what they had with those who were not so well off. All this made him so gay he seemed like a new boy. At first he felt shy, but this soon wore off, and by the time he went home he was on the best of terms with them all. Then he

had some nice things to take home, so this must be marked as one of the bright days of his life.

"Mother," said Dot when he had gone, "what makes Jim go this way?" and she limped round on her small fat feet, as much like him as she could.

"He was always lame, dear," said Mrs. Thorn. "He was born so. I'm glad that Dot has two stout legs to run on, so that she need not limp like poor Jim."

Dot thought a while with a grave face, and the next time Mug was seen she had one leg pinned up, to make it shorter than the good one.

"What did you do that for, Dot?" asked Ned when he saw the doll.

"Mug was borned so," said Dot. "She's been lame all her life. When she gets well, so she can walk 'bout, I shall send her to school."

She had heard the rest say that Jim could not go to school for this cause.

When the last day of the year had come, Jack took out his cash-box and put what was in it in his purse. Then he went to a shop where they sold jack-knives, and bought one with four blades, just like his own. At night he laid this on the chair by the side of his bed, so that he might think of it as soon as he waked. He was up at daybreak, and soon made his way, knife in hand, to Sam Hoyt's door.

There was no one down but Sam's aunt, Miss Grant. Jack put the knife in her hand, and said, "Please give that to Sam when he comes down, with my love, and tell him it is a New Year's gift from me."

We must now take leave of our young friends, for we have not room to tell more of what they did. We will hope that as they have gone on in life they have joined heart and hand in all the good deeds that lay in their path. And with this hope we will bid them good-bye.



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